

ADULT IMMUNIZATION

VACCINATION ISN'T JUST FOR KIDS ANYMORE

Many adults may still remember being vaccinated against a limited number of childhood diseases as a prerequisite to entering school. Now with children of their own, they are kept aware of mandatory vaccination programs. But what about immunization for adults?

Those serving in the military routinely receive a series of "shots" with periodic "boosters": Americans traveling to certain foreign countries may be required to obtain immunization against certain diseases; and anyone receiving medical attention for an injury is routinely given a shot against tetanus. But what about us "stay-at-home" who are not faced with "required" shots?

Rhode Island's record of childhood immunization is one of the best in the nation dating back to 1963. Unfortunately, the same is not true for adults, many of whom should be protected against vaccine-preventable diseases, but for a variety of reasons, have failed to take advantage of this readily available safeguard.

"Too many adults, including state employees, are unaware that they may be needlessly at risk for influenza, pneumococcal disease, hepatitis B, rubella, diphtheria, or tetanus," said Dr. H. Denman Scott, Rhode Island Director of Health, in a message to state employees.

"Our task is to inform all state employees about adult vaccines which prevent these diseases. I urge you to take the necessary time to find out if you need any immunizations and, if indicated, discuss your needs with your physician."

Since October, 1987, the Rhode Island Department of Health has had a new program in place to provide free vaccination against hepatitis B to all firefighters and emergency medical technicians

in the state. These personnel are considered to be at risk of contracting hepatitis B because the disease is spread through contact with the blood of infected persons.

Everyone would do well to obtain protection unless a chronic illness or condition makes immunization too great a risk. The Immunization Practices Advisory Committee (ACIP) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in its compendium of recommendations notes that a substantial proportion of the morbidity and mortality from vaccine-preventable diseases now occurs in older adolescents and adults.

"A systematic approach to immunization is necessary," ACIP says, "to ensure that every adult is appropriately protected against vaccine-preventable diseases. Every visit by an adult to a health-care provider should be an opportunity to provide this protection . . . Physicians should maintain detailed information about previous vaccinations received by each individual . . ." Doctor Scott was invited to serve on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Immunization Practices Advisory Committee (ACIP) in 1986.

How do you determine if you are among those who should be vaccinated against one of the diseases mentioned in this article? Check the Adult Immunization Self-Assessment Guide below, then call your physician or health provider for an appointment.

ADULT IMMUNIZATION SELF-ASSESSMENT GUIDE

I. INFLUENZA

People who should be vaccinated against influenza include any of the following:

- Those with chronic disorders of the heart or lungs which required physician care or admission to a hospital within the past year.
- Those with kidney disease, diabetes, cystic fibrosis, anemia ("low blood"), asthma, immunologic disorders, and those who use certain medicines that lower normal resistance to infection.
- Otherwise healthy adults 65 years of age or older.
- Otherwise healthy adults under 65 years of age who would

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like to be vaccinated against influenza to avoid unnecessary illness. (Subject to availability of vaccine).

- Persons who have extensive contact with or provide care either at home or in institutions to persons with any of the first three conditions above.

PEOPLE WHO SHOULD BE VACCINATED AGAINST INFLUENZA INCLUDE ANYONE WHO BELONGS TO ANY OF THESE RISK GROUPS AND HAS NOT BEEN VACCINATED THIS YEAR. BASED ON THESE CRITERIA, DO YOU NEED INFLUENZA VACCINE? IF YOU ANSWERED "YES," YOU SHOULD BE VACCINATED AGAINST INFLUENZA.

II. PNEUMOCOCCAL DISEASE

People who should be vaccinated against pneumococcal disease include any of the following:

- Adults with long-term illnesses involving the heart or lungs.
- Adults with other long-term illnesses, including alcoholism, diabetes, or kidney failure.
- Adults with abnormal function or removal of the spleen, Hodgkins disease, multiple myeloma, or cirrhosis.
- Adults with leaks of the fluid surrounding the brain and spinal cord or who have other treatments or diseases which lower resistance to infection.
- Otherwise healthy adults 65 years of age or older.

PEOPLE WHO SHOULD BE VACCINATED AGAINST PNEUMOCOCCAL DISEASE INCLUDE ANYONE WHO BELONGS TO ANY OF THESE RISK GROUPS AND HAS NOT BEEN VACCINATED. BASED ON THESE CRITERIA, DO YOU NEED PNEUMOCOCCAL VACCINE? IF YOU ANSWERED "YES," AND HAVE NEVER HAD PNEUMOCOCCAL VACCINE, YOU SHOULD BE VACCINATED AGAINST PNEUMOCOCCAL DISEASE. ONLY ONE INJECTION IS NECESSARY.

III. HEPATITIS B

People who should be vaccinated against hepatitis B include any of the following:

- Health care workers frequently exposed to blood, blood products, or accidental needle sticks. (Laboratory workers are at especially high risk).
- Staff members of an institution for the mentally retarded.
- Hemodialysis patients and hemophiliacs.
- Homosexually active males, sexually active heterosexuals with multiple sex partners, and sexual/household contacts of a hepatitis B carrier.
- IV drug users.
- Alaskan natives, Pacific islanders, or immigrants from eastern Asia or sub-Saharan Africa.
- Foreign travelers to areas with high rates of hepatitis B infection.

PEOPLE WHO SHOULD BE VACCINATED AGAINST HEPATITIS B INCLUDE ANYONE WHO BELONGS TO ANY OF THESE RISK GROUPS AND HAS NOT BEEN VACCINATED. BASED ON THESE CRITERIA, DO YOU NEED HEPATITIS B VACCINE? IF YOU ANSWERED "YES," YOU SHOULD BE VACCINATED AGAINST HEPATITIS B. THREE INJECTIONS ARE NECESSARY OVER A PERIOD OF 6 MONTHS.

IV. MEASLES

People who should be vaccinated against measles include anyone born since 1956 who does not have prior physician-diagnosed measles disease, a written document of immunization after the first birthday, or a blood test showing measles immunity.

BASED ON THESE CRITERIA, DO YOU NEED MEASLES VACCINE? IF YOU ANSWERED "YES," YOU SHOULD BE VACCINATED AGAINST MEASLES. ONLY ONE INJECTION IS NECESSARY. IF YOU ARE UNCERTAIN, ANOTHER DOSE IS RECOMMENDED.

V. RUBELLA

People who should be vaccinated against rubella include anyone who does not have documented evidence of immunization on or after the first birthday or a blood test showing rubella immunity.

BASED ON THESE CRITERIA, DO YOU NEED RUBELLA VACCINE? IF YOU ANSWERED "YES," YOU SHOULD BE VACCINATED AGAINST RUBELLA. ONLY ONE INJECTION IS NECESSARY. IF YOU ARE UNCERTAIN, ANOTHER DOES IS RECOMMENDED.

VI. TETANUS-DIPHTHERIA

People who should be vaccinated against tetanus-diphtheria include anyone who has not had a tetanus-diphtheria booster within the last 10 years.

BASED ON THIS CRITERION, DO YOU NEED A TETANUS-DIPHTHERIA BOOSTER? IF YOU ANSWERED "YES," YOU SHOULD BE VACCINATED AGAINST TETANUS-DIPHTHERIA, GENERALLY ONLY ONE INJECTION IS REQUIRED EVERY 10 YEARS.

NEW CHANGES IN COORDINATION OF HEALTH BENEFITS (COB)

"Birth Date Ruling" Now In Effect

Beginning in January, 1988, health insurers are using a new rule in cases of dual coverage to determine which insurer is liable for coverage of a couple's dependent children. The new rule of primacy, called "the birthday rule," states that the health care plan of the spouse whose birthday comes earlier in the year (earlier month and day) will pay first for services received by the couple's dependent children. The purpose of Coordination of Benefit (COB) rules, is to insure the distribution of claims liability in a manner which is equitable for all parties. Therefore, it is important that insurers have the necessary information to administer the benefits according to the new rule.

The rule of primacy was formerly based on gender, with the husband's health insurance always taking precedence over that of his wife in covering the dependent children. This was declared unconstitutional because it discriminates on the basis of sex.

The issue of health insurance primacy concerns dependents only, not the policy holders themselves. Single parents may still maintain their own coverage, and are not affected by this ruling.

The COB process serves to benefit employees and can never deprive them of deserved benefits. In other words, in no case can an insured person receive less benefits for a service covered under either of the group contracts than they would have been paid had only one or the other of the contracts been in effect.

Sufficient information from employees, strong administrative procedures, and a good claims system are necessary to ensure the effectiveness of a COB program. Thus, employers like the State of Rhode Island may have to implement several procedures such as annual questionnaires, to determine if possible duplication of medical insurance coverage is occurring among employees. Employees need not be concerned about such procedures, as they only serve to strengthen the cause of COB, and are thus ultimately to their benefit. For instance, the primary plan is required to pay benefits in the same manner — and at the same level — as it would if there were no duplicate coverage.

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INTRODUCING . . .

Richard M. Wessels

Associate Director
of Administration/Human Resources



Richard M. Wessels

Richard M. Wessels is the newly appointed Associate Director of Administration and head of the Division of Human Resources. Formerly Superintendent of Employee Relations for the Kaiser Aluminum and Chemical Corporation's Electrical Products Division's Northern Region, he brings to state government over fifteen years of experience in highly demanding positions encompassing all aspects of Human Resources.

A native of Ohio, Wessels is married, and he and his wife have four children. The Wessels live in Portsmouth and enjoy Rhode Island very much, so much so, that he has passed up job promotional opportunities in other states in order to remain living here. "Rhode Island," he says, "has been good to us."

Although the Wessels have been in our state for seven years, he remains deeply impressed over how Rhode Islanders accept "outsiders" and invite them to take active leadership roles in civic and community affairs. "This is not necessarily true in other states," he is quick to add.

In a recent interview, the new Associate Director outlined some of his goals and objectives; his immediate and long range plans; and discussed his managerial philosophy for the readers of *pRide*.

Wessels is affable, and comfortable to be with. Talking with him is like talking to an old friend, and you will not be long into a conversation with him before he will ask that you call him Rick.

When answering a question, his reply often is slow in coming, as though searching for that elusive, precise word with which to express a complex thought, or deliver a multi-faceted point of view. At other times, he startles you with quick, ringing and very quotable phrases. This mixture of style points to the depth of Rick Wessels' thinking.

He makes no apologies for his lack of prior government service experience, and he sees little difference between the private and the public sector.

"Government," he says, "is a business," and the principles of good management applicable to business are equally applicable to government.

"In the private sector," he says, forming an analogy, "business has a product or a service to sell at a price that customers are willing and able to pay. In the public sector, government has services to provide at a cost that taxpayers are willing and able to pay. In both instances, the end product sold or the services rendered must consistently be the best available for the money expended. Therefore, efficiency and economy of service become essential to assure that our 'customers,' the taxpayers, receive full value for every dollar spent."

Rick Wessels is greatly committed to people, and his every remark is oriented towards people. He believes deeply that every employee is a valuable asset to the system.

"The success of any organization," he says, "depends on the capabilities of its members," and when he speaks of people, you sense that he is in his milieu.

Like many others, he confesses to having had some preconceived notions about government service, and that not all of those notions were especially flattering. He readily admits that his views were incorrect, and that he has great respect for the people in public service that he has come in contact with.

He characterizes government employees as "dedicated and conscientious workers, with jobs often times made more difficult by a lack of flexibility due to constricting statutes, rules and regulations." He believes virtually all people have two superordinate motives: To make tomorrow better than today; and to be a part of/contribute to something worthwhile."

Wessels believes that every job should be "fun," interesting and challenging. Furthermore, he believes very strongly that all workers can bring about this transformation to their jobs once given the direction and needed flexibility to make it happen.

"People," he emphasizes, "must be given flexibility in their job; people must be allowed to take part in the decisions that affect their job, and the way in which they do their work."

It is management's role to create the atmosphere for this change. This is the very soul of participatory management."

When asked about his goal, he replied without hesitance, with one of those ringing, quotable phrases that often punctuated the interview: "To make an already good system better."

He views his immediate focus for the Division of Human Resources to be directed towards personnel development and training; EEO; and Workers' Compensation.

Among his first priorities for himself is to do a lot of "listening." Among his first priorities for the division is the joint "development and preparation of an overall statement of Purpose, and the establishment of principles against which future decisions may be tested." Additionally, his immediate plans call for accentuating the team management concept by honing the skills of his own organizational sub units.

Wessels has had considerable experience in labor management agreements, and he looks forward to working closely with state employee unions. He does not view unions and management as being on opposing teams. On the contrary, he sees labor unions and management "travelling the same path, pursuing the same goals and objectives — that of improved working conditions, improved employee service, and the well-being of employees —

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Richard M. Wessels Continued

making things better for people," albeit, he admits, they may sometimes appear to be proceeding at a different pace, in a different direction, using different approaches. "The challenge is in finding the right vehicles so we can travel the same path together."

Although Rick Wessels has a clear vision of the role his division will play, he lingers but briefly on the work of his organization. Soon he returns, in thoughts and in words, to the broader subject of state services and to the people charged with the delivery of those services.

As to his own role, he sees himself as a catalyst, providing the necessary environment where people are "willing to step forward and take risks, get creative — an atmosphere in which each of us thinks more about our 'customers,' the taxpayers."

"In business, the status quo is never acceptable, because the status quo actually means that you are going backwards because the competition is advancing," and he says the same approach must be taken in government.

Predictably, he intends to visit and bring his message to every department and agency of state government. His recurrent theme: "Our product is service, and we must function as a team in the delivery of those services that are consistent with the needs of the taxpayer and his willingness and ability to pay."

He believes in a personnel development and training program that will benefit employees beyond the workplace.

"Everything ever created or made, began with a thought," is a favorite expression. "Therefore," he asks, "shouldn't we be developing peoples' thinking skills? Not telling them what to think, but improving their capabilities to think," he adds.

"If we develop only the technical and behavioral skills, those skills remain largely useful only on specific situations on the job. But if we develop peoples' thinking capabilities, this improved capability can be carried forward on all aspects of the job, into all aspects of life, useful in whatever endeavors people may undertake or challenges they may pursue."

Much of Rick Wessels' managerial philosophy is embodied in a short credo in which rests three fundamental premises on the effectiveness of an organization:

"Ultimately, any organization's success is dependent upon:

- The quality of thought individual members develop and apply to their work.
- Quality of integration of thought throughout the organization.
- The capacity of its members to develop their thinking and action from commonly held principles that continually extend performance.

The implication of this is that the key to improving the effectiveness of an organization is improving the quality of thinking of its members."

Rick Wessels' vision of his new role is far from myopic. On the contrary, it is broad and far reaching, and you sense that his energies and his considerable talent will not be expended within the confines of a constricted arena.

COB Continued

The birth date ruling replaced a procedure that was nearly 23 years old, namely, the gender rule of primacy. Therefore, a transition period of up to a few years can be expected, even though insurance claims under the birth date ruling are now being accepted.

Questions regarding the birth date ruling and insurance coverage may be directed to your health insurance carrier and/or the Office of Personnel Administration, Employee Benefits Section, at Centrex (277) 3160.



FROM THE OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Executive Orders

| No. | Date | Subject |
|-------|----------|--|
| 87-16 | 10-22-87 | Reorganization of the Department of Labor. |
| 87-17 | 10-22-87 | Reorganization of the Department of Business Regulations. |
| 87-18 | 10-22-87 | Reorganization of the Department of Economic Development. |
| 87-19 | 10-22-87 | Reorganization of the Department of Corrections. |
| 87-20 | 10-22-87 | Reorganization of the Department for Children and Their Families. |
| 87-21 | 10-22-87 | Reorganization of the Department of Elderly Affairs. |
| 87-22 | 10-22-87 | Reorganization of the Department of Mental Health, Retardation and Hospitals. |
| 87-23 | 10-22-87 | Reorganization of the Department of Workers' Compensation. |
| 87-24 | 10-22-87 | Organization of the Department of Library Services. |
| 87-25 | 10-22-87 | Organization of the Department of Employment Security. |
| 87-26 | 10-22-87 | Reorganization of the Department of Human Services. |
| 87-27 | 10-30-87 | Transfers portion of MHRH's appropriation relating to children's services to the Department for Children and Their Families (DCF). |
| 88-1 | 1-7-88 | Establishes a Workforce 2000 Council within the Executive Department to develop initiatives and programs that increase the skill base of R.I. workers; promote worksite literacy programs; assist women to enter or re-enter the workforce; utilize the accumulated skills of senior citizens; involve the handicapped with productive jobs at decent wages; study the R.I. economy to determine areas of future job growth to determine the types of skills and programs needed to prepare workers for the year 2000; and improve the accessibility to the job market for the structurally unemployed and those on public assistance. |

For more information or copies of Executive Orders, contact the Office of the Governor's Legal Counsel, Room 320, State House — 277-2080.

pRIde

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Keeping A Lid On Stress

Every day we experience ups and downs. How well we adjust to these ups and downs affects our health.

Take some time out and take a good look at yourself.

"I don't have time to sit around analyzing myself. I'm a busy person," you might say. "Besides, I feel fine. There's nothing wrong with *me*."

Of course, no one knows you better than you do. But you should be aware of your feelings, and how they affect your physical and mental health.

We *all* experience some amount of stress. Stress is a physiological response to the pressures of daily living. A certain degree of stress is useful to us. It helps us get things done. But too much stress over a period of time without release can hurt us mentally and physically.

Many health-related publications have questionnaires in them that can help you to evaluate your stress level. Trained consultants may help if you feel you're just not in control.

Stress is an inevitable part of life. So whatever the case, take time out and pay attention to yourself! Identify the sources of stress in your life and deal with them.

Here are some things you can do to learn more about yourself and to defuse stress in your life:

Be a Monday Morning Quarterback. Ask yourself, how could things have been worse? Your answers will probably tell you that whatever the experience, it wasn't as bad as you thought it was. Then ask yourself, how could things have been better? Your answers will help you to understand the experience and your reaction to it. Then you'll feel better about what happened and you'll be able to *cope* better next time.

Take a 10-minute Vacation. Relaxation techniques take only about 10 to 15 minutes to learn *and do*. They can leave you feeling refreshed and eager to take on whatever challenges come your way. A stress therapist or counselor can teach you simple breathing and muscle relaxation techniques and easy exercises you can do just about anywhere.

Work Out. Exercise can be a tremendous form of release. Studies show that people who exercise regularly are better able to handle the everyday emotional and physical stresses of life. And people working to get in shape or to stay in shape tend to have more energy and reduced risk of heart disease.

Get Rid of What's Eating You—or What You're Eating. Changes in diet can help defuse stress. Eating a well-balanced diet and avoiding junk food binges and drinking less coffee and alcohol can help you feel and look better. Check



with a stress counselor or a nutritionist to see what other things you can do for a healthier mind and body.

Speak Up. Learn to tell people what's on your mind. By holding your feelings back, you hold yourself back. Expressing your feelings will evoke response and help you put things in their proper perspective. You'll be more comfortable with yourself, with the people and the situations around you.

Be Positive. How you feel about yourself and the world around you affects your physical and mental health. Studies show that people who can view change as an opportunity to learn and grow are able to achieve happier, healthier lives. If you're unhappy with yourself, feel you're in a dead-end job or have no control over the events in your life,

make changes. Join in a group activity, look at new job options and start doing things for *you*!

NOTE

HMO RHODE ISLAND
IS PLEASED TO SPONSOR
A STRESS MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP
AT THE
STATE PERSONNEL FORUM
ON MARCH 10th
FROM 10:30 AM TO 12:00 NOON.
GUEST SPEAKER WILL BE
BARRY L. JOSEPHSON, Ph.D.
TO ATTEND, CONTACT YOUR
DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEE
RELATIONS OFFICER FOR DETAILS.

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Our Commitment To Rhode Island Goes Deep.

As deep as the dedication to excellence that is the spirit of Rhode Island. We share that dedication. And we're working hard at keeping Rhode Island healthier and happier.

